Placing Animals in Urban Environmental Ethics

Clare Palmer

Introduction

This article originates in twin concerns relating to animals and ethics. One concern relates to dominant ethical approaches to animals, the other to the apparent absence of animals from some work in environmental ethics, in particular, nascent research in urban environmental ethics. In this article, I want to explore both different ways of thinking about animals ethically and some aspects of how animals might be placed in urban environmental ethics.

For several decades now, the work of Peter Singer[1] and Tom Regan has dominated animal ethics and has been the subject of classroom teaching, student texts,[2] and academic discussion. Yet Singer's and Regan's respective utilitarian and rights approaches seem, as feminist writers such as Val Plumwood, Josephine Donovan, and Deborah Slicer claim, problematic in a variety of ways.[3] I will not, in this article, revisit already well-made criticisms of the 'Singer-Regan approach.' Rather, I will think specifically about particular ethical issues raised by relationships with animals in urban environments. This approach differs from the thrust of utilitarianism or rights theories, since they tend to the view that ethical prescriptions are invariant among urban, rural, oceanic, and wilderness environments. In this sense, animal ethics in urban environments would be no different from animal ethics anywhere else. Rather, I will suggest that the complex nature of urban areas and the diversity of human-animal relationships within these areas raise very different questions for animal ethics than (say) those raised within wilderness areas.[4]

This leads to my second concern. As it is widely acknowledged, urban environmental ethics is an underresearched area. But in the literature which does exist, animals play very little part. Take, for example, the recent essay collection *Ethics and the Built Environment*. Only two papers in the volume mention animals at all, and both mentions are fleeting.[5] Or, equally, consider Roger King's article "Environmental Ethics and the Built Environment."[6] The article discusses the 'nonhuman' in general terms, but does not speak of animals specifically. It concludes by recommending four principles for the built environment. One of these is "The built environment should show respect for its users, both contemporary and future."[7] The following discussion makes it clear that the users he has in mind are *human* users. Yet animals of different kinds use the built environment constantly, just as human users do. Urban environmental ethics has tended to focus on impacts of urban environments on human life, health, and happiness, and, in addition, on the environmental impacts of urban living. But in this important discussion of

JOURNAL of SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY, Vol. 34 No. 1, Spring 2003, 64–78.

human/environment urban relations, animals disappear. They clearly do not fit into the human side of the discussion. So they become swallowed up into 'environment' or the 'nonhuman world.' But the place of animals in urban environmental ethics is not adequately considered by subsuming them into discussion of the environment in general. They are not just a contributing factor in the effects that urban environments have on people, nor are they just a part of the environment affected by human urban lives. Animals, as individuals and as groups, are invariably present in urban areas, where they live their own lives in relation to humans and human infrastructure, and their presence raises ethical questions and problems that require serious consideration in work on urban environmental ethics.[8]

Clarifying Meanings: 'Animals' and 'Urban Areas'

Before proceeding with this discussion about placing animals in urban environmental ethics, I should clarify how I will be using the term "animal." Of course, as was acknowledged by Henry Salt in the nineteenth century—an acknowledgement repeated many times since—the term "animal" itself is a problematic one, both inasmuch as in this use it implies that humans are *not* animals, and also in that it collapses many different kinds of being into one class. Further problems are generated by the boundaries of what kinds of being are encompassed by the term "animal." For the sake of simplicity I will, in this article, limit myself to considering a certain limited group of beings: mammals and birds. This is not because I am setting up boundaries of moral considerability which disqualify other beings; rather, I am using mammals and birds to suggest some starting points from which broader work on animal ethics in urban areas might follow.

Second, I should explain in very broad terms how I am conceptualizing the animals I am discussing. Even within the boundaries I have already suggested, there are substantial differences among animals. But in simple and general terms, I am assuming that the animals I am considering are sentient; that it makes sense to say that there are things which are (or are not) in their interests and things which are capable of harming and benefiting them; that they have some kind, at least, of minimal practical consciousness; and that they have emotional experiences such as fear.[9] This seems to be a reasonably uncontroversial view of animals (much less demanding, for instance, than the description Regan suggests in his characterization of being-subject-of-a-life in *The Case for Animal Rights*). Alongside this description, I also want to maintain the importance of two other animal characteristics. First, I want to work with the idea of animals as beings that can *react* to humans and other animals, or even *resist* them. I use the terms "react" and "resist" here in a sense derived from Foucault: to emphasize *practices* and *actions* rather than *intentions*. (This ties in with Ingold's idea of minimal practical consciousness.)[10] Second, and relatedly, I want to emphasize the importance of animal relationships: both the relationships animals have with one another and the relationships they have with humans.[11] Rather than thinking about urban animals as isolated individuals, I want to think of them as (like humans) enmeshed in a network of relationships. However, I do not intend by this use of 'relationship' to

suggest that the relationship is *necessarily* one of affect—that is, as Noddings maintains, "saying something about the subjective experience of members in the relation."[12] It may, and often will, have this characteristic; but some relations of material dependence, with which I am concerned in this article, may be without affect on one or both sides. In summary, then: in this article I will be thinking about mammals and birds as sentient, able to be harmed and benefited, with some kind of practical consciousness, and as reactive and relational beings. On this basis, I will assume that it is appropriate to think of animals as the kinds of beings to whom humans can have moral responsibilities, though to what degree and in what ways I do not want to specify more closely here.[13]

Having said something about this understanding of animals, it would also seem appropriate to say something about how I am using the idea of the urban. This is, of course, a controversial subject. All kinds of issues are raised about (for instance) criteria for 'urbanness'; whether there is some kind of ontological divide between the urban and the wild (as is suggested, for instance by Keekok Lee);[14] how to think about suburban areas; whether rural and 'wilderness' areas are equally human constructions, and so on. I do not intend to enter these debates here. I am working with a somewhat vague idea of urban areas as areas of dense human populations (though the degree of density, of course, varies) dominated by human constructions. I am not thereby intending to imply any ontological distinction between 'the urban' and 'the wild.'

Animals and Humans in Urban Areas

Humans have, of course, lived in higher-density settlements dominated by human constructions for thousands of years. But it is only relatively recently that urban areas have expanded to their present extent. In 1800, London was the only millionaire city in the world; by 1990, the world's 100 largest cities accommodated 540 million people.[15] Correspondingly, urban areas have expanded enormously, now covering hundreds of square miles of land. And this expansion is by no means over; all predictions suggest that urban areas will continue to grow in size.

This expansion of urban areas inevitably has profound impacts on animal populations, though the impacts are very different on different populations. Land developed for human occupation was, at some stage previously, the habitat of native wild animals, many of whom will be killed or displaced by urbanization. Where replacement habitat cannot be found, or is already occupied by other animals, displacement ultimately also results in death. Some native animals become, as it were, swallowed up in the urban, continuing to live in the places they have always lived, but adapting their lives to deal with increased human control over, and presence in, the space. These changes may be dramatic: the processes of urbanization may produce many effects on soil, water, climate, and vegetation, as well as the obvious changes of human population and construction.[16] Lives of this kind may be difficult and dangerous (threatened by traffic, domesticated animals, humans, lack of food

supply, pollution, increasingly intensified urbanization, and so on). Other native animals are confined by humans in particular protected urban spaces—nature parks or zoos.

But, of course, it is not only adaptive native animals that inhabit urban areas. Urban areas are swarming with other kinds of animals. Urbanization may displace native animals, but along with urbanization come the animals that live alongside humans, often, but not always, because humans intend that they should. Many of these animals are domesticated or feral: the pets that live in human homes, the feral animals that live in the streets, buildings, and green spaces of urban areas. Others are originally wild species that now opportunistically follow human settlement even though humans may not desire them to, such as rats and sparrows. Yet others are exotic species, brought into urban areas for display in zoos and nature parks.

All of these animals are in urban areas because humans are there, albeit for different reasons. Relict native populations are there because humans developed land on which they already lived and the animals did not, or could not, move on. Pets are there because humans wanted them as companions, bred them, and brought them to live alongside them. Feral animals were once also deliberately introduced by humans, but although they still live alongside humans in a human-dominated settlement, they no longer act as human companions. Zoo and park animals are there because humans choose to gaze at them (among other reasons). And the wild opportunistic species are there because they have developed symbiotic relationships with humans and have learned to live alongside them.

This very basic description suggests something of the complex nature of human/animal relations in urban areas. Ultimately animals are present there because humans are; but humans have a different degree of causal responsibility for the presence of different animals. I'm going to go on and argue, shortly, that these different relationships may be ethically significant.

Dependent Relationships

In what I called my "vague definition" of urban areas, I suggested that they might be seen as places of dense human populations, dominated by human constructions. As such, animals that live within them must, to a significant extent at least, be dependent on humans. The nature and degree of this dependence, however, varies.

First, take urban pets, such as dogs and cats. There are huge numbers of urban pets; statistics suggest that the majority of urban households have more pets than children. Most pets, to one degree or another, have been bred by humans to optimize particular features of the body or temperament that are most desirable for human ends. Even nonthoroughbred pets are, generally speaking, neotenized and differ physiologically and temperamentally from their wilder forebears (dogs, for instance, have reduced senses of hearing and smell in comparison with wolves). Humans have created particular kinds of bodies and temperaments in pets that suit a variety of human ends. But one of the effects of this creation is that pets have a high degree of material depen-

dence on humans. They are, generally speaking, unable to feed and shelter themselves. So humans shape the constitution of pets, and in shaping their constitutions they generate substantial material dependence.

Some feral former pets—feral cats and dogs, for instance—do survive without living in human homes. But even though they are not usually dependent on one particular human for provision, research suggests that feral populations are nonetheless indirectly reliant on human populations for food and often for shelter.[17] Like the urbanized native animals, they tend to live as scavengers among human dustbins and waste, by finding humans who will feed them, or by hunting other animals—mice and rats—that live alongside humans. They need the kind of urban messiness humans create in order to provide for themselves.

Individual humans also deliberately create other kinds of dependent relationships with native animals or opportunistic animals that follow human settlement—for instance, by feeding ducks or garden birds, putting cat food out for the hedgehog. Deliberate, sustained provision of food and/or shelter for animals in urban areas can create relationships of long-term dependence, where entire populations may be maintained by humans (as in the case study I will consider later). The relations of dependence here might be quite complex—for instance, a number of different 'feeders' may generate a population of wild animals who come to depend on them; no single human feeder is required at any one moment to be the sole provider, but if no human at all provided food the dependent animal population might not be able to sustain itself.

This is the most cursory of outlines of some aspects of the human/animal relationships we may find in urban areas. The two points I want to extract from this are first, that in most cases humans are causally responsible for the presence of animals in urban areas, although the responsibility is greater where the animal presence has been intentionally generated by human beings; and, second, that these urban animals are directly or indirectly dependent on humans for life support. Again the degree of dependence may vary: a Pekinese dog may be much more dependent on humans than an urban fox, but a nonreciprocal relationship of material dependence of animals on humans is an element that characterizes animal/human relations in urban areas.

The next question, then, is to ask, Is there anything ethical to say about this? I am going to argue that there is and that it could feed into broader work in urban environmental ethics.

Approaching Responsibility and Dependence

I've identified two related relationships urban animals may have with humans: human causal responsibility for the animal presence, and animal dependence on human material provision. These are by no means, of course, the only kinds of relationships urban animals can have with humans, but these are the ones on which I want to focus here. Furthermore, it should be noted that this discussion concerns only these kinds of relationships; I am not suggesting any universal prescriptions about how humans should relate to

all animals. I am concerned only with specific urban contexts and the particular relationships of causal responsibility and dependence that are under consideration.

What are the ethical implications of these relationships of causal responsibility and dependence? I can find little specifically relating to these questions in the context of animal ethics.[18] Even in the human context, not much has been written on ethical relationships one might view under the same description, although I have drawn on such literature as I can find. This mostly relates to ethical questions raised by the dependence of children on parents and the dependence of the sick or those with disabilities on carers.[19] Immediately this parallel raises difficulties. It suggests another version of the problems often raised about Singer and Regan, for instance—that animals are being likened to children or the sick; not, in this instance in terms of their *capacities*, but in terms of their *origins* and/or *dependent relationships*. Objections may take several forms, but primarily either that it is inappropriate for children or those with disabilities to be compared with animals (as Noddings maintains) or, conversely, that it is inappropriate for animals to be compared with those who have disabilities (as in Rodman's arguments).[20] However, I have used this literature only to explore what might be said ethically about dependent relations, rather than to suggest animals are *like* these kinds of humans. A further objection might be that in focusing on dependence I am suggesting that urban animals have no agency, that they are passive. But recognizing that animals are *materially* dependent on humans does not deny their reactivity and resistance in other respects. I am not suggesting passivity by focusing on material dependence; it is just that for the purposes of this article I am primarily focusing on this aspect of urban human/animal relationships.

Responsibility, Dependence and Ethics: Some Possible Arguments

Suppose, then, that humans are causally responsible, in different ways, for the presence of many animals in urban areas. Humans both have deliberately introduced animals into urban areas, and by the creation of urban areas, have taken over the habitats of other animals. (This causal responsibility, though, may not extend to the opportunistic species that follow human development.) This situation is perhaps best thought of as the collective responsibility of those who build and live in urban areas, though there are, in addition, many cases of special responsibilities—for instance, the responsibilities of pet breeders in breeding animals in urban areas.[21] What might follow from this human causal responsibility? At a most basic level it suggests that such animals should not be condemned for their presence in urban areas, in principle at least. (There might be additional reasons for wanting to condemn *particular* animals, but not animal presence in general.) Since the animals had no choice in the matter, it seems that negative judgments, if appropriate at all, must rest on the humans responsible for their presence, not on the animals. Further, most urban animals not only are present because of human actions, but are also, in one way or another, materially dependent on

humans. But the degree of dependence and the degree of human intention involved in the generation of dependence varies. So to consider this more carefully, we need to look at several different cases.

Pets

Responsibility both for the existence of an urban pet and for the creation of a dependent relationship usually depends on the deliberate actions of one, or several, human individuals. These human individuals have thus special causal responsibility for the existence of these individual animals, going beyond any collective responsibility for urban animals in general. That special relationships of this kind bring ethical obligations is widely maintained in ethical literature. For instance, in the case of parenthood, it is universally accepted that "a child is wronged by his parents if adequate care is not given him, and the parent violates a duty if he or she neglects to give such care" because "they bring their children into existence—or they adopt them—and it is this act that imposes duties on the parent."[22] In the case of keeping pets there seems to be a parallel argument that along with an individual's decision to produce or adopt pets comes a duty to care and provide for them. (This may sound like an ethical commonplace, but as Yi-Fu Tuan notes, the majority of American households are willing to keep their dogs for only two years.)[23] Just this case has already been convincingly argued by Keith Burgess-Jackson, and I will not argue for it further here.[24] Similar arguments might be used where, in other encounters between humans and animals, *individual* animals become dependent on *individual* humans for material provision. Take the case in which an individual begins to feed a hungry stray cat regularly (although the cat does not become a domestic pet). The cat becomes dependent for food on the human, adopting the area around its feeding place as its territory, returning to the feeding place at regular intervals. In generating this relationship, as Burgess-Jackson argues of pets, other opportunities for the cat to fulfill its needs elsewhere (being adopted by another human, being picked up by an animal welfare organization, and so on) have been closed off. This closing off—of which human actors, though not dependent animals, should be aware—has the consequence that if the human then abandons the animal by, say, moving away, the animal is likely to be left in a far more precarious and vulnerable position than it was prior to the inception of the relationship. Even if this is not the intention of the feeder, it is still a clearly foreseeable consequence of the action. If it seems likely, then, that relationships involving material dependence cannot be maintained, then they should not be entered into in the first place. It seems reasonable to argue that where humans, as individuals, assume roles of material provision for particular urban animals that lead to dependence, humans should accept, as individuals, ethical responsibility for those actions.[25]

Wild Urban Animals

The situation of wild urban animals, however, is rather different. No individual human is intentionally causally responsible for the existence of urban

wild animals, nor has any individual human intentionally established a special relationship resulting in animal dependence. But one might, perhaps, think about urban wild animals in the following way. Prior to human urban development, wild animals lived independent lives and provided for themselves. After urban development, relict populations of wild animals became engulfed in urban areas, where (albeit often by scavenging) they still try to provide for themselves. As I have already said, humans—by taking over wild animal territory—have a collective causal responsibility for the presence of such animals in urban areas. Does this *causal* responsibility suggest any kind of *moral* responsibility for these individuals and populations?

In the previous case, it was argued that if individual humans had established relations that 'closed off' animal options, so that without human support animals would suffer or starve, then individual humans acquired duties of provision. In this case, in contrast, wild animals are not dependent on individual humans. But nonetheless some of their options—the options that they or their forbears had in the wild—have been closed off, although this was an indirect and unintended consequence of collective human actions. (While in some sense the consequence might have been foreseeable, the project being undertaken in this case was about building on land, not building a relationship with an animal.) Despite the loss of some options, though, these animals have continued to survive as relict populations in urban areas; so sufficient options remain, or sufficient new options have opened up, to enable them to make a living. They are not dependent on any intentional provision from humans, and there seems no argument to be made that humans should begin to provide for them. It might be argued, though, that—since these are morally considerable individuals and since humans have appropriated their spaces for use—humans at least owe relict populations of wild animals space in which to continue to make a living (to lie up during the day, to rest, to breed, to roost). This does not imply a recommendation of the sort Roger King describes as "[a] static halt-and-withdraw strategy which presupposes that humans are at best interlopers on what should otherwise have been a non-human scene."[26] I am not passing comment on the ethical or unethical nature of urban expansion itself with respect to wild animals. Instead I am suggesting that in existing urban areas, and especially in newly urbanizing areas, spaces should be maintained, or created, to allow otherwise displaced wild animals to continue to live. Their presence could be recognized in architecture, in the design and management of streets and green space, in the construction of roads, wiring, and fencing, and in the use of brownfield and greenfield sites. Some movements toward this have already been made with the establishment of urban wildlife corridors, the protection of bat roosts in urban churches, and so on. But it is not *just* special 'set aside' urban areas as (in Callicott's terms) ecological refugia, important as they are, which are being suggested here.[27] Urban wild animals need to be able to move from place to place without being trapped by fencing, being mown down by cars, or flying into plate glass windows. It is recognition of these survival needs in planning and organization of urban spaces that I am maintaining to be ethically significant.[28]

Opportunist and Feral Urban Animals

Two categories of urban animal I have not yet considered are the opportunists and the feral. I call animals "opportunists" when they follow human settlements and live alongside humans. They are not animals that were wild natives of the area beforehand; nor were they deliberately introduced by humans. They are members of species—rats, mice, sparrows, starlings—which have adapted to make a living in one way or another out of humans. In this bare sense, it seems as if humans have, prima facie, no responsibilities toward them. They may be, in a sense, dependent on humans to live, but this is a one-sided sense; there seem no arguments to suggest humans are responsible to assist this living. Humans have made no special arrangements to provide for the animals (as with, for instance, pets); nor have they 'closed off' possibilities by taking over their space. Just by living urban lives, opportunists are attracted to live alongside humans and become reliant on them. In this context, animals are, as it were, the agents; they have initiated the contact, not humans. Other forms of dependence may subsequently be created—by humans becoming feeders, for instance—but, this aside, no ethical responsibility to provide food or space seems to follow. The animals relate to human-dominated spaces as they are; indeed it is because human-dominated spaces are as they are that opportunist animals move into them.[29]

The relationships between humans and feral animals, on the other hand, seem more complex. First, feral animals are domesticated in origin, so in some senses and to different degrees their bodies and capabilities bear the stamp of human actions. Second, most animals that become feral—or their forebears—were deliberately introduced by humans into urban areas. Third, many urban animals that become feral have been abandoned by individual humans: that is to say, the ethical relationship I argued for above has been abrogated; while yet other urban feral animals are the offspring of those so abandoned. Thus humans are both collectively and, in some cases, individually responsible for the situations in which feral animals are located. But in terms of material dependence, their relationships with humans vary enormously. Some have individual relationships of dependence on individual humans, setting up the kind of ethical relationship I considered earlier. Others have population relationships with populations of humans who provide for them. Others have no direct relationships of dependence on humans at all, relying, as many wild urban urban animals do, on scavenging for food. In some respects human relationships with feral animals are the most difficult to consider of all (involving, in the case of feral cat colonies, for example, questions about desexing as well as provision and space). Given the limited space here, I am not able to explore these relationships in more detail.[30] I will instead to look at a recent relevant case in the hope that this will explore in a more concrete way some of the difficult ethical questions raised by feral urban animals.

The Pigeons of Trafalgar Square

Trafalgar Square is one of London's most famous landmarks and most widely visited attractions. One of the things for which it has long been famous are large flocks of pigeons, pigeons which have, for decades, been fed by visitors to the square, much of the feed being obtained from a licensed pigeon feed trader. It is universally agreed that the continued existence of the flocks in the square, in anything like such large numbers, is dependent on continued feeding. But in 2001, the new mayor of London decreed that the pigeons in the square should no longer be fed and tried to revoke the license of the pigeon feed trader. A variety of arguments were used to support this decision. The pigeons damaged and fouled buildings and public spaces and created 'slip hazards' to humans; they harbored diseases such as encephalitis, influenza, toxioplasmosis, and tuberculosis, all of which could be spread to humans; and they carried avian diseases that they could spread to other pigeons.[31] By removing the license of the pigeon feed trader, it was argued, the food supply to the birds would diminish, and the number of birds using the square would reduce to something nearer the normal density of pigeons in London.

Even in the formal report that put forward such arguments, however, a number of uncertainties about the effects of this policy were expressed. One series of uncertainties concerned *human* behavior. No one, for instance, knew how much of the food fed to the pigeons came from individuals who did not purchase it from the pigeon feed trader. And it could not be predicted whether people might bring their own food for the pigeons if the trader lost his license, thus maintaining the pigeons' food supply. A second set of uncertainties concerned *pigeon* behavior. What would happen to the pigeon population, both in the square and in surrounding areas, if feeding was stopped? Would birds spread out into other sites? Would there be nutritional stress to the birds in the square, causing suffering or death? The official report maintained that most pigeons would range out to other sites and leave the square, though there might be some short-term stress, leading to the death of weak or diseased birds and pigeon chicks.[32] Other urban ecologists argued that—even accepting the biological models used in the report itself—pigeon population niches in London were already full; birds moving out from the square either would find themselves unable to find a new niche in which to sustain themselves or would outcompete other pigeons, dislodging them and leaving them vulnerable to starvation. Thus, the debate focused on the question whether suffering to pigeons would be caused by removing the pigeon feed trader's license (no one argued that pigeon suffering did not matter, although some suggested that it mattered less than the good consequences of reducing their numbers). There was little discussion, though, of the whole context of the human/pigeon relations in the square and how reflecting on this might provide a relevant perspective from which to consider human moral responsibilities toward the pigeons. I want to explore these questions a bit further.

First, in most general terms, urban pigeons in Britain at least are, essentially, feral birds. They are descended from stock doves deliberately bred by

humans for racing and other purposes. Genetically and temperamentally, at least, they have been shaped by deliberate human intention into the kinds of birds they have become. Many of these birds, at some point in the past, were abandoned by humans or went astray. However, they managed to make a living—and to reproduce successfully—by scavenging in urban areas. Inasmuch as their populations manage without deliberate human support, there seems to be no case that humans should provide for them. However, in some cases—such as in Trafalgar Square—humans have deliberately chosen to take the path of providing feed for pigeons. Their presence in huge numbers in Trafalgar Square is because humans have for many years deliberately encouraged them to be there, to breed there and to feed there. That a license was ever issued to a pigeon feed trader indicates that, at one time, it was policy to encourage feeding pigeons—largely because tourists found it an attractive feature of the square. So a deliberate choice was made, both at a local policy level, and by thousands of individual visitors to the square, to establish and maintain relationships with pigeons that made them materially dependent on human support.

Of course, these relationships are not straightforward. They are not individual-individual relationships; there will, after all, be very few humans who—in comparison with individual feeders of individual feral animals, or pet keepers—establish individual relations with particular birds. Yet it is individual people—albeit a large number of different ones—who each make a choice to bring food or to buy food from the trader to feed the pigeons. However, no action of an individual person in itself is sufficient to create or maintain the population of pigeons in the square; the pigeon population is an accumulative outcome derived from the compounded actions of a large number of different people over a sustained timescale.[33] No one individual is responsible for setting up a relation of dependence; but nonetheless, owing to the actions of humans (and the reactions of pigeons) a relationship of material dependence has been established. In such a case, it does seem appropriate that responsibility for the relationship lies in the relevant local policymaking process.

But in the light of human involvement in generating the dependent relationship with pigeons in the square, the sudden cessation of provision as a matter of policy seems morally problematic.[34] As I suggested earlier, we normally consider the creation of dependent beings to imply a moral responsibility to provide for them. We might consider in this case Paul Taylor's 'rule of fidelity' (a rule he developed with application to wild, rather than feral, animals). Taylor says: "Under this rule fall the duties not to break a trust that a wild animal places in us (as shown by its behavior), not to deceive or mislead any animal capable of being deceived or misled, to uphold an animal's expectations, which it has formed on the basis of one's past actions with it, and to be true to one's intentions as made known to an animal when it has come to rely on one."[35]

Taylor's principle, while clearly containing elements appropriate to this case, raises a number of problems. Most obviously, the principle is dependent on construing animals as capable of 'trust' and as having 'expectations.' This would seem to imply quite a sophisticated view of animal minds (more

sophisticated than the one I adopted earlier in the article). Many definitions of trust, especially more cognitive ones that focus on beliefs about the trustworthiness or goodwill of others, seem inappropriate in the context of animals.[36] And yet, there is a sense in which some form of such language seems appropriate when, the morning after the license is removed, the pigeons gather, mill around at the spot where the pigeon feed trader had always worked, and continue doing so day after day. It might be possible to develop some noncognitive sense of trust here based on feeling or disposition that could be applied to this situation.[37] Or it might be more appropriate to focus (as I suggested earlier in the article) on the more concrete *practices*, *actions*, and *reactions* involved (the provision of food, the gathering of the pigeons, the removal of food, and the gathering of pigeons without the food's being provided) and use these as the basis for a practical understanding of trust—or perhaps expectation—as manifested in behavior. Of course there are inappropriate occasions for trust or expectations even of this practical, behavioral kind (in a human case, to trust someone to provide something that she has never provided in the past, or said she would never provide, or there is no reason that she should provide, or that she is unable to provide, for instance), but this instance does not seem analogous to such cases. There have been repeated manifestations of a particular behavior by humans, which have produced a particular reactive behavior in a pigeon population; by withdrawing the license, humans are abandoning a relationship, or series of relationships, which humans chose to create and maintain and which has created a responsive bird population of pigeons. Although this is a public policy decision rather than the decision of an individual, it is surely not substantially different from abandoning a pet for whom one has taken on responsibility. Pets too can be messy and destructive, but as I have already argued, abandoning them to make their own way—even if we think there is some chance that they will manage to find another place to live by themselves—is a denial of an acquired ethical responsibility. That is not to say that once one has established a relationship of dependence with an animal there can never be any end to the commitment. Alternative arrangements which honor the commitments of the relationship can be made. But abandonment of provision, while it may be an easy option, does seem to be a breach of trust, a failure of freely offered and freely initiated commitment, to beings who are dependent on humans for their lives and well-being.

Conclusions

I hope that some of the ideas in this article have begun, at least, to address my two earlier concerns. One involved moving away from utilitarian/rights approaches to animal ethics to focus instead on contexts and relationships; the other related to the absence of animals from urban environmental ethics. I have suggested that ethical responsibilities of humans toward urban animals vary depending on those animals' relationships to humans. But I have also argued that urban animals should be taken account of in urban environments, and that one area of concern here is human causal responsibility for the presence of animals in urban areas and the degree of dependence which such

animals have on human beings. This has, of course, been only a very preliminary discussion, but I hope to have made some sort of case for the importance of considering animals in the development of urban environmental ethics.

Notes

[1] Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1984), and Tom Regan, *The Case for Animal Rights* (London: Routledge, 1984).

[2] See Rosalind Hursthouse, *Ethics, Humans and Other Animals* (London: Routledge, 2000), a textbook focusing on interpreting the work of Regan and Singer, though it also includes a section on virtue ethics and a discussion of some of Mary Midgley's work.

[3] See Deborah Slicer, "Your Daughter or Your Dog? A Feminist Assessment of the Animal Research Issue," *Hypatia* 6, no. 1 (1991): 108–24. Slicer concisely summarizes a range of concerns about essentialism and exclusion. Other interesting criticisms can be found in Val Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (London: Routledge, 1996), and Josephine Donovan, "Animal Rights and Feminist Theory," *Signs* 350 (1991): 358–69.

[4] That there may be particular ethical responsibilities owed to wildlife has been argued by Rolston: see, for instance, Holmes Rolston, "Ethical Responsibilities towards Wildlife," *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association* 200 (1992): 618–22.

[5] Herbert Girardet, "Greening Urban Society," in *Ethics and the Built Environment*, ed. Warwick Fox (London: Routledge, 2000), 25, 207.

[6] Roger King, "Environmental Ethics and the Built Environment," *Environmental Ethics* 22, no. 2 (2000): 115–31.

[7] Ibid., 130.

[8] My thinking here is influenced by Erica Fudge's reflection on Jonathan Bate's book *Romantic Ecology*. See Erica Fudge, "Reading Animals," *Worldviews* 4, no. 2 (2000): 101–13.

[9] Both the significance of sentience and what might be meant by animal 'thought' are contentious, of course. That animals are sentient in the sense of having a phenomenology of pain is disputed—by Carruthers, for instance, although in recent work he does argue that animals are capable of nonphenomenological desire frustration, for which sympathy might be appropriate. See Peter Carruthers, "Sympathy and Subjectivity," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 77, no. 4 (1999): 465–82. But that animals can experience pain is widely enough accepted, I think, as to be a reasonably noncontroversial assumption; see, for instance, Daniel De Grazia, *Taking Animals Seriously* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). With respect to thought, Ingold argues that animals do not think in the sense of having concepts, mental images of desired states and so on, but that nonetheless they manifest a certain practical consciousness. He argues that much of the time humans too operate at this level, such as when riding a bicycle. He distinguishes between intention in action and prior intention: only humans have the latter, but both humans and other animals have the former. See Tim Ingold, "The Animal in the Study of Humanity," in *What Is an Animal?* ed. Tim Ingold (London: Routledge, 1994), 84–97. Alistair MacIntyre in *Dependent Rational Animals* (London: Duckworth, 1999) suggests a similar interpretation of human and animal minds and behavior, and for the purposes of this article, I will be working with it.

[10] This idea is discussed further and defended in Clare Palmer, "'Taming the Wild Abundance of Existing Things': A Study of Foucault, Power and Animals," *Environmental Ethics* 22, no. 4 (2001): 339–58.

[11] Holland makes some interesting points about this in his work on the genetic modification of animals. See Alan Holland, "Species Are Dead: Long Live Genes!" in *Animal Biotechnology and Ethics*, ed. Alan Holland and Andrew Johnson (London: Chapman and Hall, 1998), 225–40.

[12] Nel Noddings, *Caring* (London: University of California Press, 1984), 150.

[13] This is, of course, a large assumption; but it is impossible in one article to provide arguments for this case (amply made elsewhere) as well as to address the subject of this article.

[14] Keekok Lee, "The Taj Mahal and the Spider's Web," in *Ethics and the Built Environment*, ed. Warwick Fox (London: Routledge, 2000), 183–92.

[15] Girardet, "Greening Urban Society," 15.

[16] Jennifer Wolch, Kathleen West, and Thomas Gaines, "Transpecies Urban Theory," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 13 (1995): 735–760, at 737.

[17] Jonica Newby, *The Pact for Survival: Humans and Their Animal Companions* (Sydney: ABC Publishing, 1997), 61.

[18] The only work I can specifically find relating to this is Gill Aitken, "An Examination of the View That Wild and Domesticated Animals Merit Different Treatment with Special Reference to the Urban Fox and the Feral Cat" (Master's dissertation, Lancaster University, 1998) and a short section in Noddings, *Caring.*

[19] Alistair MacIntyre, in *Dependent Rational Animals*, discusses just this lack of philosophical discussion of dependence and vulnerability. He also raises the difficulty that such discussion as there is tends to present those who are dependent as the subjects of moral benevolence from those who are independent, rather than acknowledging the universal nature of dependence of some kind and the fact that at some point in our lives, all of us are physically, materially dependent on others. The denial of *ecological* dependence is widely discussed, for instance, by Plumwood; see most recently Val Plumwood, *Environmental Culture* (London: Routledge: 2002).

[20] See Noddings, *Caring*, 151, and John Rodman, "The Liberation of Nature," *Inquiry* 20 (1977): 83–145.

[21] This idea of collective causal responsibility may be objected to on the grounds that some individuals (for example, local policymakers and property developers) carry more responsibility than others (for example, many of the urban poor). This would certainly need unpacking in a longer study of this issue.

[22] Norman Daniels, *Am I My Parents' Keeper?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 29. It should be noted that Daniels cites this relationship as part of a rejection of the argument that the duties of parents and children are symmetrical. But it is the idea that the relation is symmetrical (i.e., that children have reciprocal duties to parents) to which he is objecting, not that parents do have these duties to children.

[23] Yi-Fu Tuan, *Dominance and Affection: The Making of Pets* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 88. Along with the practice of sterilization, this does suggest evidence against the widely held view that pets are usually treated as family members. See Aaron Katcher and Alan Beck, *Between Pets and People* (Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1996).

[24] See Keith Burgess-Jackson, "Doing Right by Our Animal Companions," *Journal of Ethics* 2 (1998): 159–85. Burgess-Jackson maintains that this is not a contractarian argument, any more than the duties of a parent to a child are contractarian.

[25] There are ways in which my account here has similarities to that of Noddings, *Caring*, 155–58. However, Noddings's understanding of human/animal relations seems to me very problematic, in particular her emphasis that relationship entails mutual subjective engagement and responsiveness.

[26] King, "Environmental Ethics and the Built Environment," 118.

[27] See Baird Callicott and Michael Nelson, eds., *The Great New Wilderness Debate* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998). This is actually a kind of micro-level argument of Callicott's more macro-level argument. Callicott maintains that it is no good having wilderness as ecological refugia and continuing to live in unsustainable societies; there is a need for the whole society to change. Similarly, I am arguing that to make a place for urban wild animals, it is no good to have small oases of ecological refugia in cities if the moment an animal moves outside, its life is subject to overwhelming threat.

[28] It might be possible, for an animal rights theorist at least, to make the much stronger claim that wild animals have habitat rights, that in developing land for urban use those rights have been violated, and that wild animals have land 'entitlement.' Such an argument (problematically) might track the land entitlement claims of colonized native peoples. I am inclined to maintain that what is important is the space for wild native animals to continue to make a living, rather than to argue for some kind of claim rights on land by prior occupation. See David Lea, "Aboriginal Entitlement and

Conservative Theory," *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 15, no. 1 (1998): 1–14, for discussion of difficulties involved in such prior-occupation claim rights in the case of indigenous peoples.

[29] Where opportunist animals are concerned, the ethical issue is not so often one of provision, but of population management or 'pest control.' Opportunist animals may make a living alongside humans, but humans may not want to live alongside them. The question of 'pest control' of opportunists is unfortunately too large to be embarked upon here but is obviously a significant issue in this context.

[30] A further issue, which I also have no space to explore further here, is how humans should behave when there are clashes of responsibilities: for instance, in Australia, where feral (and pet) cat populations, as well as imported wild exotics like foxes and rabbits, have been decimating native wild animals, in urban areas as well as other places. All kinds of complicated issues are raised here, and it would take another article (at least) to explore them.

[31] Detailed in the report to the Lord Mayor of London by Allan (2001), available online at ⟨http://www.london.gov.uk/approot/mayor/pigeons/⟩.

[32] Ibid., section 4.

[33] This accumulative benefit is something like the inverse of Feinberg's concept of accumulative harms, which Andrew Kernohan, in "Rights against Polluters," *Environmental Ethics* 17, no. 3 (1995): 245–59, summarizes as "the kind of harm brought about by the actions of a group of people, when the actions of no single member of that group can be determined to have caused the harm, and when, as far as we know, no single action taken by itself has enough impact or is likely to have enough impact to be called harmful" (246).

[34] In fact, the recommendation was for food to be withdrawn over a week or two, although this would be insufficiently gradual to prevent serious outcomes for the birds. There was also discussion of the possibility of introducing a bylaw to prohibit anyone from feeding the pigeons; the outcomes of a law of this kind would, obviously, be much more dramatic for the pigeon population.

[35] Paul Taylor, *Respect for Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 179.

[36] Even a definition such as Karen Jones's, with both a cognitive and an affective element, seems to require far more than could be attributed to animals. Jones says: "to trust someone is to have an attitude of optimism about her goodwill and to have the confident expectation that when the need arises the one trusted will be directly and favorably moved by the thought that you are counting on her." See Karen Jones, "Trust as an Affective Attitude," *Ethics* 107 (October 1996): 4–25, at 5–6.

[37] Lawrence Becker, in "Trust as Noncognitive Security about Motives," *Ethics* 107 (October 1996): 42–61, talks of one form of noncognitive trust as a matter of reliance, a *disposition* to depend on people. It may be that this will do some of the work in the pigeon case.